Mizzou New Music Initiative
University of Missouri

University of Missouri School of Music
2026-2027 Guest Artist Series

Tyondai Braxton

EXTENDED PLAY

opening by the

Creative Improvisation Collective

November 13, 2026 . 7:30 PM
Sheryl Crow Hall

Tyondai Braxton is a composer, producer and professor who has been writing and performing music since the mid-1990s. Formerly the front man of experimental rock band, Battles, Braxton's solo work since 2010 has incorporated elements of electronic, electro-acoustic and orchestral composition across a range of contexts from intimate solo albums and large-scale symphonic works, to collaborations with legendary modern composers like Phillip Glass.

This concert serves as one of the first performances of work from Braxton's new solo album *Splayed Werks*. Years in the works, it is an album that reflects the embrace of radical hybrids in modern music — at once club sound system-ready, art-installation-leaning and music-school-mediated while carefully hand-crafted and deeply intuitive.

The ***Creative Improvisation Collective (CIC)*** is a Mizzou ensemble devoted to learning trans-idiomatic improvisational techniques and indeterminate pieces in a workshop setting. Students play in both smaller subsets and as a full group and learn about key figures in the development of European and American experimental musics through reading and listening assignments. We also discuss various philosophies and approaches to improvising in addition to exploring where and how improvisation exists in musical culture/s. We explore a range of practices, including free improvisation, directed improvisation, and indeterminate pieces, alongside listening and reading that situates these practices historically and culturally.

The goal is not only to develop improvisational skills, but to deepen students' awareness of form, texture, interaction, and compositional decision-making as it unfolds in real time. Improvisation occupies an ever more prominent role in modern music making and free music has become an important and primary musical methodology for various communities of musicians. As our musical landscape continues to evolve, discovering and developing improvisational skills greatly enhances the overall musicianship of the students who participate in CIC. The Collective has performed on campus at Stotler Union, Sheryl Crow Hall, and at Pickard Plaza as part of Craig Colorusso's *Sun Boxes* installation. They have also been featured at events for Shotgun Cinema at Columbia Art League and Dismal Niche at Hitt Street Records.

Splayed Werks

(Erased Tapes)

By Piotr Orlov

> *My philosophy on releasing music has changed a lot, but also my idea of what it means to be an artist. The important part of the artist's job is to archive what you're doing—what you're excited about, what you're dealing with, what you're reacting against—putting that in a form that documents your life… At the moment, we're all looking out into the world, dealing with the helplessness in a time of war, media over-saturation. What's the role of the artist in that? I think the archiving of any particular creative idea in the moment is one of the most significant things an artist can do now. Things I previously thought were important —'this piece means so much to me,' or 'listen to how this chord arrived'—are actually much less so.*
>
> **-Tyondai Braxton**

Even at first blush, ***Splayed Werks***, Tyondai Braxton's fifth album, his first full-length release since the recording of his 2018 symphonic work, *Telekinesis*, reveals itself as unlike what came before and marks the beginning of a new chapter with UK label *Erased Tapes*. First off, there's a lot more music here, 70+ minutes of pure electronics and sound design. Plus, it's divided in a way that's out-of-step with the longer forms the 47-year-old composer/producer has previously imagined into being. Of the album's 15 tracks, more than two-thirds are sub-five minutes.

The album brings together mostly newer works alongside pieces composed across the past decade, some of which appeared previously as standalone releases. To fully represent the scope of this period, Braxton incorporates the *Dia / Phonolydian* (2022) and *Multiplay* (2023) singles into ***Splayed Werks***, foregrounding the project's long-form compositional arc. Along with *Salt Point* and previously unreleased commissioned works such as *4 Zones* (2018) and *K Space* (2021), these pieces were always part of a broader, evolving body of material. Here, they are re-edited as newer versions and remastered by the excellent Matt Colton at Metropolis Studios in London and woven into a continuous narrative. The result is not so much a compilation, but a record that traces its own lineage in real time: a body of work composed across years, now fully realized as a single, cohesive statement.

What the circumstantial facts can't reveal is the social, in-real-life context of ***Splayed Werks***, an expansive episodic work that plants a musical flag on a turbulent period, and on which darkness and ambiance, rhythm and light, instinct and precision, organic textures and messy playfulness all share space. These ***Werks*** take stock of a constantly evolving world, as well as the evolutions experienced by their creator.

It may be a perfect album for 2026, a time when the sonic landscape continues to fervently embrace increasingly radical hybrids, at once club soundsystem-ready, art-installation-leaning, and music-school-mediated. But also, importantly, intuitive and hand-crafted. It's no stretch to say that Tyondai had a hand in building this world. His two-decades-plus-long career has seen him co-found electronic prog-punk heroes Battles (which he's described as "a laboratory that masqueraded as a band"); performing as a duo with Philip Glass; writing numerous electro-acoustic and chamber commissions for celebrated American new-music ensembles such as Bang on a Can All-Stars, Alarm Will Sound, Third Coast Percussion, Brooklyn Rider, and Yarn/Wire; having his "part installation, part band" HIVE project appear at The Guggenheim Museum, Sydney Opera House, and a 3-night residency at Big Ears Festival; and deliver a series of technologically ambitious, at times orchestral, works for lauded labels of electronic, experimental and future-music, Warp and Nonesuch Records.

Meanwhile, the world outside has also radicalized. Mechanisms behind the creation, promotion, distribution and broadcast of new experimental music have been violently disrupted, even as audiences for it have grown. In the post-COVID streaming age, juxtapositions like "popular" vs "underground," and "album" vs "collection" vs "project" have been more in-flux than ever before. The volume and acceptance of previously neglected ambient and contemporary classical sounds has been tempered by a lack of critical context, seeded with algorithmic buffoonery and AI fabrication. Such tensions enlighten not just the make-up of ***Splayed Werks***, full of music recorded between 2018-2025, but its relatively simple sonic-collage forms.

The ***Splayed*** shapes and structures have also been influenced by the transformations in Braxton's personal life. That Tyondai is now a father may not come as a surprise, but the fact that the man who

rebelled against his formal music-school education in the late-‘90s, has, in 2022 become a professor of music composition at Princeton University, does. This lifestyle change—a full-time academic gig, escaping the careerist hamster-wheel beholden to commissions and collaborations, a home studio as his own workshop and testing ground, with the desire to finish things and the perspective to not be precious about it—is also key to the album’s sound. Braxton’s time is his own, and his idea of what it means to be an artist in our time has evolved as much as the surroundings. This too is what ***Splayed Werks*** is about. It may be a cliché to call each ensuing album by a veteran artist their “most personal,” but it’s no stretch to say this one best reflects who Braxton is in 2026.

As a portfolio, ***Splayed Werks*** hews to the menu of a dance music meets minimalist electronic composition, a throughline that stretches from IDM absurdists like Aphex Twin and Autechre, to contemporary immersives like Mica Levi and Laurel Halo. (And, to a lesser degree, to Braxton’s comrades and occasional collaborators, Kieran “Four Tet” Hebden, Jeffrey Cantu-Ledesma and Ben Vida.) It’s a world in which the multitude of dirty rhythms strays far outside club-land’s big rooms—though one can imagine expert mixing hands and a world-class soundsystem transforming the dubwise lo-fi linearity of *Oslo* into a psychedelic wonder, while the interplay between the bass-synth and the constantly deviating shuffle on *UnFS* may qualify as a leftfield banger. And its composed beatless spaces have little to do with current ambient proclivities—the at-once aggressive and ecstatic, panning miniature, *Realistic Water* sounds like power Laraaji.

The spectrum of Braxton’s ideas and directions reveals a voracious mind at play, changing up without overcomplicating the proceedings. Two different pieces called (fittingly) *Multiplay*, layer and connect skittering textures in beatwise whimsy, before giving way to a droning dread and organised noise; yet each is adorned with birdcalls to balance the synthetic with the pastoral. *Nimble FX* is also built on hyper-jittery stop-start rhythm lines, and great big cinematic synths. All this music feels fluid, seemingly ready to change in the moment rather than having been dependent on some grand design.

Meanwhile, longer, older, more spacious compositions like *4 Zones*, whose short parts assemble into a narrative-free sound design, and the closing *K Space*, whose chaotic ambiance gives way to what sound like Moog hits, are more grounded, their inclusion shaping ***Splayed Werks*** into a multidimensional space, instinctive in how it all fits together.

> *Every record I've ever finished, I've been shocked with what it is. I've never known it was finished until it was. Then you get to learn about it retroactively. If I've done it right, the finished thing will feel like its own personality, its own being, its own vibe. [*Splayed Werks*] included.*
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> **-Tyondai Braxton**

Dismal Niche Arts

Founded in 2013 in Columbia as a DIY record-label, Dismal Niche Arts (D.N.A.) is an artist-run nonprofit dedicated to facilitating independent and experimental music and art in Columbia, MO. Since incorporating as a nonprofit in 2015, the organization has focused on the annual Columbia Experimental Music Series which includes the four-concert Left Field Series in partnership with The "We Always Swing" Jazz Series, the Extended Play Fall Festival and intermittent concerts, workshops and film screenings throughout the season.

D.N.A. programming welcomes artists from across the U.S. and from around the world to Columbia offering local residents rare opportunities to experience world-class presentations of innovative and non-conventional music, art, and performances that would not likely otherwise occur in Columbia.

MIZZOU NEW MUSIC INITIATIVE

The Mizzou New Music Initiative brings together an array of programs intended to position the University of Missouri School of Music as a leading center in the areas of composition and new music. The Initiative is the direct result of the generous support of Dr. Jeanne and Mr. Rex Sinquefield, and the Sinquefield Charitable Foundation. The Sinquefields' vision is to create an incubator for the composition and performance of new music, and to position Missouri as a major center for the music of tomorrow.

UPCOMING EVENTS

New Music Ensemble with Landlocked Opera
***The Murderess* by Dr. Allison McIntosh**
***Snow Angel* by Dr. Bonnie McLarty**
featuring performances by
Christina Ray and Dr. Alexandra Schoeny
7:30 PM Sunday, December 6, 2026
Sinquefield Music Center 130

Visit newmusic.missouri.edu for a full list of events and opportunities!

Partner Organizations

University Concert Series • www.concertseries.org
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Columbia Civic Orchestra • cco.missouri.org
We Always Swing Jazz Series • www.wealwaysswing.org
CAAM • www.ChoralArtsAllianceofMissouri.com
KMUC Classical 90.5 FM • www.kmuc.org

Requests for accommodations related to disability should be made to building coordinator, Susan Worstell, 206 Sinquefield Music Center, 573-884-2604 at least seven days in advance of event date. Events are subject to change.